

Dr. GIBSON's
Affize-Sermon,
Of the *Growth* and *Mischiefs* of
POPERY.

THE G. & S. O. N. S.
ALICE-GERMON



Of the Great

POPEY

A
S E R M O N

Of the *Growth* and *Mischiefs* of

P O P E R Y :

Preach'd at the

A S S I Z E S

Held at *Kingston* in *Surrey*,

Sept. 5th 1706.

By EDM. GIBSON, D. D. Rector of *Lambeth*, and Chaplain to His Grace the Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*. *K*

Publish'd at the Request of the High-Sheriff, Grand-Jury, and other Gentlemen.

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H O S E A VII. 9.

Strangers have devour'd his Strength, and he knoweth it not ; yea, Gray Hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

IN this and the foregoing Verses, the Prophet is speaking of the Children of *Ephraim*, and the miserable Condition to which they had reduc'd themselves by mixing with the Heathen Nations. He complains in the Verse immediately before the Text, that *Ephraim* had mix'd himself among the People, that is, among the *Egyptians* and *Assyrians* ; and what this mixture was, we learn from several parts of the Prophecy, where they are charg'd with making Images and Idols, with asking Counsel at their Stocks, and with making many Altars to Sin : The *Egyptians* and *Assyrians* had taken the Advantage of that Indulgence and Encouragement they found among them, and by the benefit thereof had entic'd many of the *Israelites* to join in their Idolatries. The Mischiefs whereof are express'd in the Text ; the First, that these Strangers had devour'd the Strength they had, while they continu'd unanimous in the Worship of the True God ; the Second, that tho' the Decays occasion'd by these Mixtures were plain, and

and did as evidently forebode their Ruin, as a sprinkling of Gray-hairs foretels the Approaches of Old Age ; yet, such was their Stupidity, and their Indifference for the True Religion, that they were not at all sensible of this growth of Idolatry among them, nor of the heavy Calamities it would bring upon their Nation. *Strangers have devour'd his Strength, and he knoweth it not ; yea, Gray Hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.*

The terrible Effects of this their Indulgence to Idolatry and Unconcern'dness for the Worship of God, did not only come to pass as it had been foretold, but the Prophet himself liv'd to see it. By encouraging the Idolatrous Nations to the prejudice of the True Religion, they had provok'd God to Anger against them, and by suffering those Nations to seduce so many of the *Israelites* to Idolatry, they had exceedingly impair'd their own Strength ; and so, having made themselves ripe for Destruction, the King of *Assyria*, the Rod of God's Anger, found them an easie Prey, and carrying them into Captivity, plac'd his own People in their stead.

I shall not draw a Parallel between the Kingdom of *Israel* with regard to *Pagan Idolaters*, and the Condition of these Kingdoms with regard to *Popish Idolaters*. But thus much is certain, That there is a People among us, whom we justly charge with *Idolatry* ; That the Liberties they have taken
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for some Years past, have very much exceeded the Bounds which our Constitution has set them; That the Exercise of their Religion and their Interposition in Publick Affairs, have been manag'd with much greater Boldness and Openness than our Laws have thought consistent with the Safety of Church and State; That the Confidence of the Priests in their Attempts to seduce the Protestant Subjects of the Realm, has been beyond the Example of former Times; That, presuming upon the Lenity and Tenderness of the Government, they have actually perverted many unwary and ignorant People; That altho' these things are clear and certain, tho' these *Strangers* to our Constitution go on to affront our Laws and *devour our Strength*, yet we have those among our selves, who, like the *Israelites* in the Text, *will not know it*, but on the contrary have taken great pains to *suppress* the Knowledge of it; nay, have been so zealous in that Work, as to improve any Suggestion of the least Mischief from Popery, into a form'd Design against the Constitution of our Church.

Things being thus, it may not be unreasonable at this time, if from the Words of the Text we take occasion to enquire into these Three Heads:

First, In what respects, the Papists may be call'd *Strangers* to us.

Secondly,

Secondly, In what Instances and by what Methods they strengthen and enlarge themselves, and in proportion devour our Strength.

Thirdly, How it comes to pass, notwithstanding all this, that there are too many among us who will not know it: Like the Israelites in the Text, *Altho' Strangers devour our Strength, yet they know it not*; and, *tho' Gray-hairs are here and there upon us, yet they know it not.*

First, In what respects may the Papists be call'd Strangers to us? And these are, In Religion, In Government, and (as a consequence of these two) In Interest and Design.

They are Strangers to us in Religion. By their Idolatries and Innovations, by perverting the Holy Scriptures and raising their own Traditions to an equal Authority, they have exceedingly corrupted the Faith and Doctrin of the Gospel. Their Worship is over-charg'd with a vast variety of superstitious Rites, in which the true Spirit of Devotion is swallow'd up and lost; they have chang'd the Substance for the Shadow, and, contrary to the Apostle's Rule, have made it a Worship in the Letter, and not in the Spirit. Their Discipline is wholly exercis'd by Emissaries from Rome, set up in opposition to the Spiritual Governours of our Church, and

and acting under the immediate Direction and Authority of a foreign Head.

And because the Church of *England* has purg'd her self from these Idolatries, Superstitions and Innovations, and rejecting their Traditions has made the Scripture the Rule of her Faith, and has accommodated her Worship to the Word of God and the true Ends of Devotion, and deliver'd her self from the insupportable Tyranny of the Papal Chair: By this means, we are become *Hereticks* and *Schismatics* in the account of the Church of *Rome*; as such, the Sentence of Excommunication is yearly denounc'd against us by the Pope, and our Destruction is declar'd to be a meritorious Work. And that all this is not mere Form and Ceremony, but a Direction zealously pursu'd where-ever it is practicable; we see by the bloody Inquisitions in some of the Popish Countries, with the terrible Persecution upon the Protestants in a neighbouring Nation, and the swift Approaches to the same Cruelties at home, when that Spirit could shew it self with safety, under the Influence of a Popish Prince.

Far be it from us, to make this merciless Treatment of *our* Brethren, a Rule of our Carriage and Behaviour toward *their's*. We have not so learn'd Christ, as to think Fire and Faggot a fit Application to the *Consciences* of Christians, or to reckon the Destruction of their Bodies a proper Means for the

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Salvation of their Souls. But, methinks, these Cruelties towards Protestants in other Nations, should make the Papists in our own somewhat more modest and cautious ; at least, they ought not to think themselves entitl'd thereby to *new* and *unusual* Liberties. And tho' the Good Nature and Religion of *English-men* forbid them to *copy* those Examples of Cruelty ; we may well be allow'd so far to *observe* and *remember* them, as to be jealous of the Growth of that Religion among our selves, which in other Countries could animate the Professors of it to such unhuman Barbarities towards our Protestant Brethren.

They ate also *Strangers* to us in *Government* : Princes can have no hold of the Members of the Church of *Rome*, while they own a superior Head, who claims a Power of Absolving Subjects from their Allegiance and even Degrading and Excommunicating the Sovereign. And as this pretended Authority is chiefly exerted by the Pope against *Protestant* Princes, so are the People prepar'd to receive, approve, and execute his Sentences, by another ungodly Doctrine, That no Faith is to be kept with Hereticks. And to what seditious and cruel Attempts these Principles have blown up some of the Members of that Church, can be unknown to none who have look'd into the History of these Kingdoms since the beginning of Q. *Elizabeth's* Reign.

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It is to be hop'd, that the greatest part of our *English* Papists, being born and bred in the same Air with our selves, and receiving their Protection from the establish'd Laws, have so good a share of Tenderness and Gratitude, as to be proof against these cruel Suggestions of the Emissaries from *Rome*. But it is also to be fear'd, that there will be a number at all times, of Condition and Inclination desperate enough to undertake such Enterprizes, as are agreeable to the Principles of that Church, and shall be judg'd by their Infallible Guide to be a seasonable Service to the common Cause. And we may well suppose, such Dispositions are the more strong and numerous, at a time when the whole Body of our Papists disown the Title of the Prince, in favour of a Pretender of their own Religion; and that they are yet more ready and zealous, since the Nation (sufficiently sensible that the *English* Constitution will not thrive under a Popish Prince) have cut off their hopes of a Popish Successor for ever, except some bold and desperate Undertaking shall make his way to the Throne.

It is far from the Temper of the *English* and the Nature of our Constitution, to make Men suffer upon bare Presumptions: But at the same time the regard we owe to our Selves and our Constitution calls upon us to be very *Watchful*, when we are sure there is an Enemy in our own Bowels. When we find such

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a Spirit moving among us, it behoves us to observe narrowly *which way* it moves and to *what degrees*; that it may be kept under such Restraints as the Safety of Church and State shall require. Their Principles in effect declare, and we are all abundantly convinc'd, that whatever Strength or Interest they have, will upon a fair opportunity be employ'd against us; and therefore it nearly concerns us to know the Extent of that Strength and to be jealous of the Increase of it. 'Tis the Voice of the Nation, that we have no *present* or *future* Security (under God) but in the Prosperity of Her Majesty's Arms and the Succession in the Protestant Line; and how then can we answer it to our Selves, our Posterity, or our Religion, if we make it not our utmost Care, that they who we are sure have it in their *Will*, have it not also in their *Power*, to shake or undermine these Foundations of our Safety?

These Two Oppositions, In Religion, and Government, suppose a Third sort, namely, In *Interest* and *Design*: For the Spirit of that Religion is not wont to lie still without Designs, much less to overlook any fair Opportunities of serving them. If ever there was a juncture that oblig'd the Papists in Prudence and Decency to more than ordinary *Tenderness* in giving Offence, it is now; when their declar'd Disaffection to the Government makes them

so liable to be suspected, and when the Success of *their* Aims and Wishes would evidently be the ruin of *our* Laws and Religion. And it were happy for the Nation, and perhaps for themselves too, if their known Principles in Government and Religion were the *only* Testimony of their Designs. But this is a Happiness not to be hop'd for, while their Priests are so open and bare-fac'd in making Profelytes of the weaker sort, and (forgetting how shamefully they were baff'd in a former Reign, and how obnoxious they are to the Laws at this Day) art not afraid to send Challenges to the Ministers of our Church, on purpose to carry off their Profelyte in publick Triumph, after they have made sure of him by private Arts: while many of their People busie themselves openly in the National Elections, for those whom they conceive to be most favourable, or least opposite, to their main Design, and are very free in censuring of others, who have no Crime but their Zeal for the Protestant Succession, the great Barrier against that Design: while they triumph in the Misfortunes of the Kingdom, and repine at the publick Prosperity and Success, with such freedom and openness as few other Nations would bear: In a word, instead of guarding against Suspensions, and a prudent Care not to give any Offence or Jealousie (a Behaviour that might well be expected in their present Circumstances,) too many

many among them seem to be trying what Degrees of Provocation the Government will bear.

These Practices (we may hope) are heartily condemn'd by the more *prudent* and *modest* part of that Persuasion ; who will therefore think it reasonable, that the establish'd Constitution should provide for its own Safety ; and if that Provision should happen to bring Inconveniencies upon them , will lay the blame where it ought to rest, that is, upon the intemperate Zeal of the Emissaries from Rome, and of others whom they have been able to work into these provoking Measures.

I pass on to the Second General,

Secondly, In what Instances, and by what Methods, they strengthen and enlarge themselves, and in proportion *devour our Strength*.

We have already shown, how opposite they are in Religion and Government, in all their Measures and Designs , to the establish'd Constitution of Church and State. And the consequence of this Opposition is, that what they gain, we lose ; whatever new Strength or Spirits we suffer them to get, are all drain'd out of our own Body. Every Proselyte they make, immediately becomes our profess'd Enemy, not only in Religion but in Policy too ; lifting himself at the same time under Two
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foreign Heads, one in the Church, the other in the State. And it is generally observ'd, that such Converts are more *remarkably active* and *furious* in the Cause they have espous'd; whether it is, that Fickle Heads are naturally fond of new things, or that they think it for their Honour to make a show of a thorow Conviction.

And as every Convert to the Popish Religion becomes immediately a Zealot for a Popish Prince; so it happens at this juncture that the Zeal of some of our own Church for the pretended Prince of that Religion, proves the occasion of making them Proselytes to the Religion it self. A Community of Measures and Wishes in the Affairs of State, draws on a Correspondence and Good-liking between *them* and the Members of the Church of Rome; and the Courtesie which they find upon that account from Papists, by degrees wears off the Abhorrence of Popery; by which means, the Missionaries of that Church (who are not wont to neglect Opportunities) find their Access easie, and the Work half-done to their Hands.

God be thank'd, it is only upon the Weak and Ignorant, that this Poyson works: The more discerning among them retain the same Detestation they ever had of the manifold Corruptions of the Church of Rome, and a very Learned Person of that number has publickly warn'd the Nation of
Dr. Hicks
his Confe-
sion with
a Popish
Priest; in
the Pre-
face.

the Boldness and Success of the Priests in making Converts, and tells us, from his own Observation, the Arts and Methods by which they carry on their Work, and laments that *the Growth of Peopery among us should be greater than formerly, notwithstanding the Increase of Penal Laws.*

The truth is, those Penal Laws are so much soften'd, or rather laid aside, by the *English* Clemency and Good-nature, that it has long been the Wish of wise and considering Men, to see fewer Laws and more effectual Execution. They have liv'd so long under the Terror of Penal Laws, and found so little Inconvenience from them, that it will be hard to convince them that the Legislature is ever in earnest. And yet these very Laws, being part of our *English* Constitution, are appeal'd-to in the Popish Countries as undeniable Testimonies of the Sufferings of their *English* Brethren; and while, in great Tenderness, we are suspending our Laws at home, we are reproach'd abroad as the most cruel Persecutors. This is but an ill Return from the Missionaries of the Church of *Rome*, for the great Indulgence they have found among us; which should oblige them at least to do *Justice* to the Church of *England*, by confessing that as the several Laws they complain of were first made upon some remarkable Attempts of the Papists against the establish'd Constitution of Church or State; so nothing but fresh
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Provocations of the same Kind has driven the *English* to the Execution of them. They know, that by the Laws of some other Countries it is Criminal to be a Protestant, and the most peaceable Behaviour is no Protection; and they know as well, that it has not been the Papist as such, but only the *provoking, seditious, and turbulent* Papist, who has found any disturbance from the *English* Government.

In the Infancy of the Reformation under *Henry* the Eighth, the great Work was to extir- Hen. VIII.
pate the Authority of the Pope and establish the Supremacy of the Prince. Now, both these the Point under our present Consideration *supposes* to be settled; which is not, by what methods the Papal Authority was excluded, but in what way those who adhere to the Religion of the Pope, have been treated in a Country where his Authority was abolish'd. And it is well known, that the disaffection of that Prince to the main *Doctrines* of Popery, was not so great, as to induce him to any remarkable Hardships towards those, who would at least be *silent* under his own Supremacy.

His Son King *Edward* the Sixth, went further, and establish'd an *Uniformity of Service and Administration of the Sacraments throughout the Realm*; 2 & 3
Edw. 6.

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Edw. 6. c. 10.

but that Law only enjoyn'd the Minister to use this and not the Mass-Book; and the People, not to interrupt the Minister or speak against the Service. And when it appear'd by experience that the Missals which had been formerly us'd were a great obstruction to the Uniformity intended, they were only call'd in, to give a more free and easie passage to the *publick* Service, without disturbing either Priest or People in the private exercise of their Religion.

Camd. Ann.
1558.
3 Eliz. c. 1.

Notwithstanding the bloody Reign of Queen *Mary*, so far was her Successor the glorious Queen *Elizabeth* from the least disposition to Cruelty, that she contented her self to restore the Supremacy and the Publick Service to their former State; allowing the Papists a share in her Counsels, and, in a subsequent Law against the Pope's Authority, exempting Peers of the Realm from the disabling Oath, and frequently declaring that no Subject who would live quietly and peaceably should be disturb'd on the account of Religion.

'Tis true, the Laws afterwards grew more severe, but it was because the Papists grew more seditious. To execute *Bulls of Absolution* and *Reconciliation* from Rome, or to receive Absolution and *Reconciliation* in virtue of such Bulls,

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was made High Treason. But let the History of the three preceeding Years explain that Law, and determine whether it was owing to the Severity of Protestants or the Sedition of Papists. There we find, that the Pope had granted Authority to *Saunders* and others, to absolve all the *Camd. Ann.*
English who would return to the Church of *1568.*
Rome, and that they were very zealous in the Work; That the same Pope had sent his Bull --- *1569.*
into *England* by *Morton* the Priest, to Anathematize the Queen, deprive her of the Throne, and absolve her Subjects from their Oaths of Obedience; That in virtue hereof many of the People were withdrawn from their Allegiance, a dangerous Rebellion rais'd, circular Letters sent to the Papists to rise and assist in the Cause, and the Bull it self publish'd in the Citiy in a very --- *1570.*
open and insolent manner.

Ten Years after, we find a new Enforcement of the Law against Bulls; but it was because *23 Eliz. c. 1.*
the Priests had found new Devices to evade the former, and to carry on the work of *absolving* and *reconciling* by other ways. We find Penalties for saying and hearing of Mass, but we find *Camd. Ann.*
in the History of the same time that great numbers of Priests were sent into *England* and *Ireland* from the Seminaries abroad, under pretence *1580.*

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of preaching and administering the Sacraments, but really to withdraw the Subjects from their Obedience to the Queen. The same Law lays a Penalty upon absenting from Church, and after a Year's absence enjoins the finding of Sureties; which is not to be thought strange or cruel, when the Emissaries of the Church of Rome (under whose discipline the Absenters liv'd) were the profess'd Teachers of Rebellion; and when a Design had been detected between the *Spanish* King and the Pope, to dethrone the Queen, and restore Popery in the Kingdom.

Camd. Ann.
1578.

27 *Elix. c. 2.*

The next Law against Papists, commands all *Jesuits*, *Seminary* Priests, and others, to depart the Realm. But turn to the History of that time, and there you find great numbers of Priests coming daily into *England*, who taught that the Queen was no Queen, and that whatever had been done by her Authority since the Bull of Pope *Pius*, was null and void. The same Law forbids the sending of Children or Contributions to the Seminaries abroad; and so the same Historian tells us of great numbers of Children sent over to those Seminaries, and receiv'd there on condition that they first made a Vow to return, when they were instructed in their Learning and Discipline; that is, in the

Camd. Ann.
1581.

—1580.

the rankest Principles of Sedition and Rebellion.

While they were thus diligent in sending their Emissaries to corrupt the People, it is not to be wonder'd that the great Council of the Land ^{35 Eliz. c. 1.} should countermine their Endeavours, by obliging all who should be found guilty of Corrupting, to *Abjure* the Realm. And if, the same Year, another Law was made to banish Papists ^{35 Eliz. c. 2.} from Court, and confine them to the Neighbourhood of their own Dwellings; our Histories will explain it, by shewing that in the compass of a very few Years several Designs had ^{1584.} been form'd and carry'd on to *Assassinate* the ^{1585.} Queen. ^{1586.} ^{1587.}

King *James I.* began his Reign with a Revival of Queen *Elizabeth's* Laws against Popery: and well he might, when he reflected upon the many wicked Designs against the Person and Government of his Predecessor, and that upon a prospect of her Death they had in the most publick manner disputed his Title to succeed. ^{1 Jac. c. 4.}

Three Years after, we find Papists confin'd ^{3 Jac. c. 4. 5.} under higher Penalties to their Places of Abode; and greater Rewards propos'd for the discovering of Priests, and exprefs Declarations requir'd against the Pope's Authority to depose Princes

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and absolve Subjects from their Obedience, against dispensing with Oaths and taking them with Equivocations and mental Reservations. But it is to be remember'd, that all this was done upon the discovery of the most hellish and execrable Plot that we read of in any Age or Nation, the Gunpowder-Treason; which, we all know, had been carry'd by the Priests, upon these very *Principles*, to the point of Execution.

25 Car. 2.
c. 2.

30 Car. 2.
c. 1.

To these Restraints, there were added in the Reign of King *Charles* the Second, the *Sacramental Test*, and the Exclusion of *Popish Peers* out of the great Council of the Land. For the occasion of which, I need not appeal to History: I appeal to the Memory of many present, for the Countenance given at that time to Popish Measures, the impatience of the Papists to put them in Execution, and their Attempts to shorten the Way for a Popish Successor to the Throne; who, when he came to the Throne, did abundantly justify the *Wisdom* of our Legislators, by making the removal of that *Test*, one of his first Endeavours for the Establishment of Popery.

It may be thought Presumption in one of our Order, and especially before this Learned Audience,

dience, to intermeddle in the Laws and Statutes of the Realm: but it will be favourably consider'd, that they are Laws which concern *Religion*, and are only cited in an *Historical* Way; that, by comparing the Seditious Practices of the Papists as recorded in our Histories, with the several Laws they have occasion'd; it may appear at one view, That the Papists have been the sole Authors of their own Misfortunes; That these Restraints from time to time, were brought upon them by Rebellion, and not (as they pretend) by Religion; That the *English* Legislature have proceeded in their Restraints *Gradually*, as the repeated Attempts of the Papists upon the Persons and Government of our Princes have render'd them necessary, and, That nothing can extort a sanguinary Law from the *English* Temper, but an indispensable regard to their own Religion and Government.

But what Severity soever may be pretended in the *Laws*, it is very certain there is none in the *Execution*. And he who considers how strict the Laws and how high the Penalties are, against any Priest who shall attempt to pervert a Subject to Popery, or shall say Mass, or even be found in the Realm; and against all others who shall harbour a Priest in their Houses, or

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send Children or Money to a Seminary abroad; whoever knows the high Penalties upon these Practices (to name no more,) and then considers how common and familiar they are *generally believ'd* to be among us, will see how little mischief the Papists fear from these terrible Laws they complain of, and how much they are indebted to the Goodness and Tenderness of the *English* Government.

But they must not hope that the *English* Good-nature will hold out against all Provocations: The Laws will rouse themselves and break loose at the sight of such unprecedented Freedom and Boldness, as we have beheld of late Days. It is a known Crime in the Eye of the Law, to import Popish Books from abroad; but we have seen them printed and publish'd at home, and dispers'd over the Nation with the greatest Industry, and not only so, but with formal Advertisements of the Place where a variety of Popish Books were to be publicly sold. They know it is Capital to attempt the perverting of a Protestant Subject; and yet they are not content to carry on this Work with caution and secrecy, unless they do it with a kind of Triumph, in defiance of Parents, Husbands, and all other Superiours and Relations. They are strictly forbidden

bidden to send Children to the Seminaries abroad ; but if a late Complaint was well-grounded (as I doubt not but it was) they are now beginning to bring the Seminaries home. They know, there is nothing against which our Constitution has more carefully guarded, than their intermeddling in the Affairs of Church or State ; which, one would hope, should be a Warning to mix in the Interest they prefer, with greater *Caution* ; and if they must rejoyce in our Misfortunes, and repine at the publick Success, to do it at least in a more private and modest Way.

These and the like Provocations have mov'd the great Council of the Land to take a strict Survey of the present State of Popery in the Kingdom ; in order, as it is hop'd, to apply an effectual Remedy to this growing Evil. And in the mean time, while the Priests of the Church of *Rome* are so very busie, it cannot be an unbecoming part in the Ministers of the Church of *England*, to lay to heart the visible Increase of Popery, and to warn the People how zealous they are in promoting it ; that so, we may raise an equal Zeal and Concern for the true Protestant Religion establish'd among us.

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I proceed to the Third and Last General,

Thirdly, How it comes to pass, notwithstanding the Papists are so much *Strangers* and *Enemies* to our Constitution, so open and zealous in promoting their own Interest and by consequence in *devouring our Strength*; that there are too many among us *who will not know it*: Like the *Israelites* in the Text, *Altho' Strangers devour our Strength, yet they know it not*; and tho' *Gray Hairs* are here and there upon us, yet they know it not. Was it through Supineness or Inadvertency, and that they did not observe or regard it; the thing were less to be wonder'd at: But it has been espous'd and labour'd as a *Cause*, and the People have been told in the most publick manner, that Popery is only a Bugbear to scare and terrifie them; nay, they have been taught to believe, that the Complaints of Danger from that Quarter, are a certain Mark of Disaffection to the Church of *England*.

What we are to expect if Popery should prevail, can be a Doubt with none who know the Spirit and Principles of that Religion, and reflect upon the *Terrors* of a late Reign; the remembrance whereof, one would hope, should
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make it an establish'd Principle in the Hearts of all true *English Men*, That we can never be too watchful against the Designs and Approaches of Popery. But I know not how ; those Days of Danger and Terror are clean forgotten by many amongst us ; who while they treat the Memory of our glorious Deliverer, and those Worthy and Learned Prelates who stood in the Gap, with the utmost Contempt and Indignity ; can make themselves a kind of Advocates for the Papists, and persuade the Nation, in effect, that neither the Increase of Popery at home, nor the open Attempts of a Popish Pretender abroad, deserve our Fear or Regard. And it is very evident, that their Diligence to remove the Fears of Popery and divert the Nation from all Suspensions of that Kind, has for some Years been a great Encouragement to this provoking Behaviour of the Papists.

'Tis true, the Papists are not the *only* Enemies to our Constitution : There is another sort who Dissent from us in Worship and Discipline ; but being restrain'd by Penalties and Incapacities so much *lower* than the Papists, are evidently judg'd by our Constitution to be Enemies of a *less-dangerous* Nature. The Legislature considers, That They own no Foreign Head in Church or

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State; that in the Doctrinal Parts of Religion, they are at a less distance from us, and so are brought over with greater Ease to the Establish'd Church: that in fact, abundance have been brought over by gentle and courteous Usage, and their Numbers undoubtedly decrease by the Toleration; which appears, among other Testimonies, by a Letter of Complaint to that purpose, from several of the Ministers in the Country to their Brethren in the City: That as to the National Interest at this juncture, they are (for ought appears) very cordially in it; true to the Queen, utter Enemies to *France*, and hearty Friends to the Protestant Succession. Upon these Accounts, the Wisdom of the Nation thinks fit to grant them an *Indulgence* in Religion; and I think it is now agree'd on all Hands, that by the terms of Christianity there ought to be no Persecution *purely for the sake of Religion*, and that, in Experience, gentle Methods appear much more effectual than severe ones, to bring them to a favourable Opinion of the Establish'd Church, and by degrees to Conformity with Her.

Far be it from us, to preach *Security* to the Members of our Church, with regard to these Men. On the contrary, Let us take it for granted that

that they would be very *well pleas'd* with a greater share of Liberty and Power; and let them be made sensible that it is in vain to hope for more, nay, that the modest and inoffensive use of what they have, is their best Security for the continuance of it. But, on the other hand, while they keep within the Bounds which the Laws prescribe, let us not make them Enemies of a larger Size than the Constitution has drawn them, much less equal them, in point of Danger, to the Papists, those irreconcilable Enemies of our Religion and Government. And it ought certainly to make some difference in our Regard, that they so freely contribute their Assistance, in this critical Juncture, against the common Enemy of *Europe*; while the great Hopes of the Papists are evidently plac'd in his Success.

And yet, notwithstanding the manifest *Inequality* of Danger from these Two; if we enquire into the true Cause why so many among us are thus industrious to remove the Eyes of the Nation from Papists, it will appear to be, that they may fix them more *keenly* upon Protestants; that is, in plain terms, that they may leave that Quarter naked, where our greatest Danger lies. Passion, Prejudice, and Interest, get possession of the Minds of Men; and being rooted there, will not suffer.

suffer them to see the true Interest of their native Country; which at this time, if ever, requires us to keep the strictest Eye upon *them* whose Principles and Practices declare their Partiality to our Enemies, and to prevent all Jealousies and Misunderstandings with *those* who assist us heartily in the common Cause; so far as they may be prevented with *Safety to our Constitution*, which all Parties must allow us to make the Rule and Measure of our Dealings with them.

Within the Memory of the present Age, it was the pleasure of the Court that the Penal Laws should be vigorously executed upon the Dissenters; which has since sufficiently appear'd to be a Popish Stratagem to divide the Protestant Interest, and thereby to strengthen and enlarge their own. By these Arts were the Papists preparing the Way, when a Prince of that Religion came to the Crown; under whose Influence the Interest of Popery advanc'd and grew apace, till it was ready to swallow us up. It pleas'd God to look upon us in our Extremity, and to send us a glorious Deliverer; but let us remember that he has no where promis'd to send new Deliverances, as oft as a People shall think fit, by their own Folly and Perverseness, to plunge themselves into new Dangers.

To

To prevent this, and that every one of us may do his part to perpetuate our Laws, Liberties, and Religion; let us sacrifice our private Passions and Animosities to the Publick Good; or, if these must be indulg'd, let them at least be laid aside in a case where our Religion is so nearly concern'd. Let us listen honestly and impartially to the establish'd *Laws* and our own *Reason*; which will first tell us, who are the greatest *Strangers* and *Enemies* to our Constitution, and then teach us to keep the strictest Watch where we find the greatest Danger. In a full assurance of the Safety of the Church of *England* under Her Majesty's happy and glorious Administration, and in pursuance of Her own Royal Commands, let us be the constant Promoters of Peace and Unity in our several Stations; that we may procure the Favour of Heaven, and our joint Endeavours for the publick Good, may be Crown'd with Success.

Above all, let us be more just to Her Majesty, our Selves, and the whole Nation, than to turn Advocates for those, who in contempt of all Laws are open Advocates for a Foreign Power, in order to bring in a Foreign Religion.

From which terrible Judgments may God of his infinite Mercy evermore deliver this Church and Nation, for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ; to whom, &c.

F I N I S.

A Sermon, against SPEAKING EVIL OF PRINCES,
AND THOSE IN AUTHORITY UNDER THEM :
Preach'd at the Assizes held at *Croydon* in *Surrey*,
March 7th 1706. By *Edm. Gibson*, D. D. Rector
of *Lambeth*, and Chaplain to his Grace the Lord
Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

Sold by *A. and J. Churchill* at the *Black-Swan*
in *Pater-Noster Row*.

